



FEMA

Homes Built With Love -- and Lots of Extra Nails

Freeport, TX – Hurricane Ike rudely interrupted Frank Bartolomeo and his team of Habitat for Humanity volunteers just as they were finishing the framing of their latest house in Freeport. Winds through the coastal town reached higher than 90 miles per hour (mph) in the early hours of September 13, 2008 with scattered tornadoes. Nearby on the Gulf Coast, storm surge and hurricane-force winds shattered neighborhoods. It was only a matter of days, however, before they were back at their labor of love: building Habitat homes.

Bartolomeo, 77, a retired chemist, and the volunteers evacuated inland until it was safe to return and begin moving downed trees and repairing ripped roofs throughout southern Brazoria County, west of Galveston.

“We have built 66 homes in southern Brazoria County since 1991,” Bartolomeo said. “We had no more damage to any of them than a few lost shingles here and there and minor water damage in one of the units. We are relieved but not surprised. We have never had structural wind damage or flooding from rising water in any of our Habitat units.”

The secret to their good record is hidden in the details of how and where they choose to build.

“First of all, we go by the city codes on everything,” Bartolomeo said. “The city code officials are a great help to us and keep us updated on all the latest code changes. We are lucky to have a Texas Windstorm Program inspector in our group, and we abide by everything he says, too.”

But they don’t stop with the codes. The volunteers go above and beyond the code so the house will hold together, even in a stiff coastal wind.

“We want to build homes to last,” said Marc Bartolomeo, Frank’s son. “The people who live in these houses are not earning so much, so the homes need to be maintenance-free. They can’t afford damage. They help with the construction, of course, and building to the highest quality gives them a certain sense of pride – and for us, too.”

Ask Bartolomeo and the southern Brazoria Habitat volunteers about the construction and you will get a whirlwind tour of the framed-in house, top to bottom. Here are the steel braces on all connections and the bolts that anchor the frame to the slab, and over there are the extra-strong roofs, the added bracing over the doors and windows, the precise pattern of nails tying the sheathing to the roof.

“We build to combat the wind sheer that could suck up the roof, like an airplane gets lift.



**Brazoria County,
Texas**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Floodplain Management

Primary Funding:

Non-profit organization (NPO)